



Solidarity

& Workers' Liberty

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No 436 26 April 2017 50p/£1

VOTE LABOUR

Workers' Liberty members, including those expelled from Labour by the party bureaucracy, will be out campaigning in the next six weeks for a Labour victory in the 8 June General Election.

The hopeful signs are that we will be campaigning alongside many of the half-million or so people who have signed up as Labour members or supporters since 2015.

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PREPARE TO FIGHT!

Inside:

Brexit and the election



The election is being fought on Brexit, Labour needs a clear policy.

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Reverse the rise in inequality!



Solidarity examines Labour's economic policy.

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Far right surge in France



The Front National's Marine Le Pen comes close to the French presidency.

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Russian lessons for today's workers



Joan Trevor reviews *The Russian Revolution: when workers took power*

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US rush to state killings

By Stephen Larkin

On Friday 21 April the US state of Arkansas carried out the first in a series of four executions, all scheduled before the end of the month.

Ledell Lee was killed at the age of 51, after more than 20 years on death row; his was the US's seventh execution this year, and the first to take place in Arkansas since 2005. The remaining inmates are, at the time of writing, scheduled for execution within a week.

It must've been a harrowing final few hours for Lee, who was granted a temporary stay of execution minutes before he was supposed to be put to death.

It took less than five hours for that last appeal to travel from

Arkansas' lower courts to the US Supreme Court, where the first tie-breaking vote from Trump appointee Neil Gorsuch ensured its rejection. (With the judge's confirmation earlier this month, five out of nine members of the Supreme Court are conservative, and therefore ambivalent — at best — towards the death penalty).

The court's decision was communicated at 11.30 pm CT that night; Lee was declared dead at 11.56 pm.

To remark upon the likelihood of a Trump appointee being responsible for a death mere days after taking office is perhaps, by now, to state the obvious (and invite a jaded nod from the reader). Yet it is far from the only conclusion one should take from this case.

The circumstances surrounding Ledell Lee's execution are the kind

of sordid ones we might expect from an episode of 'Fargo', not from a supposedly impartial judiciary, in a supposedly advanced democracy.

Asa Hutchinson, Republican governor of Arkansas, originally planned for the state to hold eight executions by the end of this month but four were successfully stopped by court orders last week. (Lee was the only one whose appeal on the basis of intellectual disability was refused).

FARCICAL

If Governor Hutchinson, elected riding the Tea Party wave in 2014, could not afford to lose the support of his hardliners, this sudden rush to murder also had a more farcical explanation.

The state's stock of midazolam — the sedative component of lethal injection — is set to expire on 30 April, and will be difficult to replenish. An absurdity further compounded by the recent revelation that another ingredient in the execution cocktail, vecuronium bromide, was purchased by the state under false pretences (it couldn't have got it otherwise).

There are other similar details to this grim story — Ledell Lee continually claimed his innocence, was convicted in an unfair trial (not only was his judge having an affair with the prosecutor, but his counsel was reportedly drunk at the time of the hearing), and was refused DNA tests.

All this only serves to illustrate the moral bankruptcy of a state where the judicial system is inherently political, and human beings can be sacrificed for short-term electoral approval.



Patients not passports

By Gerry Bates

Since April 2017 NHS Trusts have been obliged to check patients' ID, with a view to determining their immigration status, before giving them treatment.

Since 2014 certain migrants — those who do not have indefinite leave to remain or are not here on a temporary or student visa — have to pay 150% charges for secondary care.

These charges will now to be expanded to primary and emergency care and those who cannot pay will to be reported to the Home Office.

Many of the people targeted for charging are refugees — some of the most vulnerable, and poorest. Yet the government says it wants to recoup £500 million through these charges.

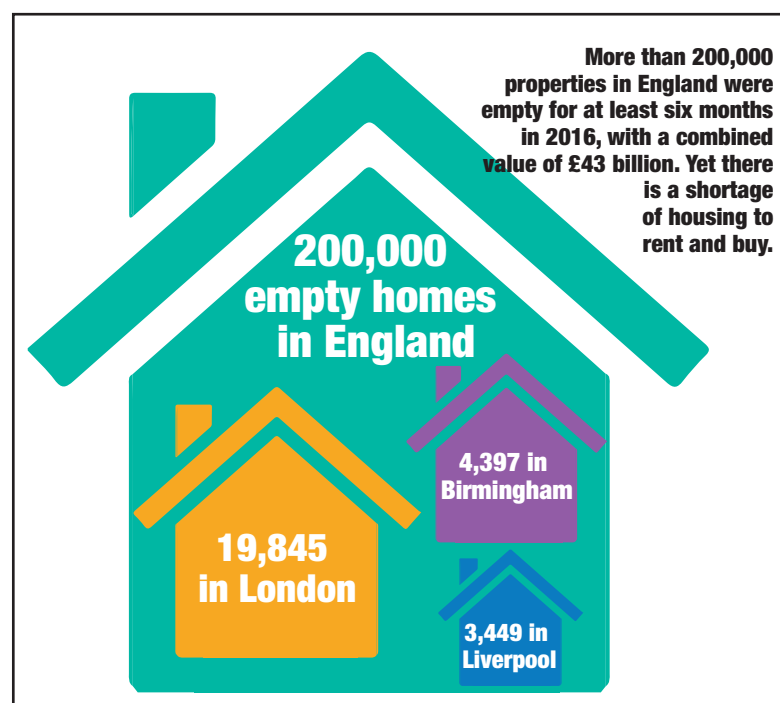
Government policy is built on a racist narrative — that "health tourism" is rife (it's not, it accounts for an estimated 0.02% of the total NHS bill). This policy will also encourage racial profiling and discrimination.

Arrangements for payment are supposed to be left to a doctor's discretion but even those patients needing urgent treatment are meant to be asked for a "down payment".

Many health workers feel these rules destroy the trust patients must have in health services in order to get the treatment they need. Lives are being put in danger.

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• www.docsnocops.co.uk



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Big cities voted against the Erdogan regime

Turkish socialists Marksist Tutum comment on the results of the Turkish referendum

The big cities such as Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, Antalya, Denizli, Diyarbakir, Adana, Mersin and Eskişehir, where the working class is concentrated, said no to the one-man regime in the referendum held on 16 April.

Half of the population did not want the one man regime, despite the fact that all the state's resources were mobilised to win the referendum and democracy was suppressed.

Democratic rights were suspended, all opposition groups were suppressed, and their voices were reduced. In the cities where the Kurdish people lived, tens of thousands of voters were moved

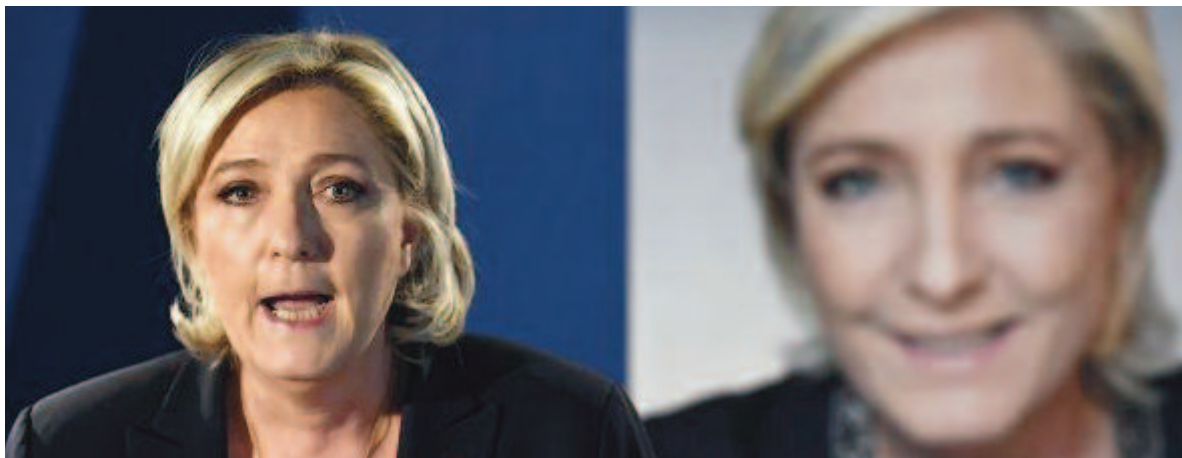
to other places where they were supposed to vote.

Since the media is dominated by the government, the no campaign could not reach the masses by that channel.

The working class in the big cities feel and see that the "powerful Turkey" propagated by the AKP does not benefit them.

Now the Erdogan government, determined to pursue adventurist imperialist politics in the Middle East, will not stop back from building new restraints for the working masses. The economic, trade union and democratic rights of the working class will be further truncated.

The first task at this point is to strengthen the organised struggle by claiming the working class's May Day tradition of international unity, struggle and solidarity.



Far-right surge in France

By Colin Foster

The first round of the French presidential election, on 23 April, confirmed that “Trump effects” are spreading.

The 2008 economic crash and the economic depression since then have discredited mainstream neoliberal politics, and so far right-wing nationalist, “identity politics”, demagogues have seized most of the gains.

The revolutionary socialist candidates, Philippe Poutou and Nathalie Arthaud, with 1.21% and 0.65%, did a bit better than in 2012, but still worse than in 2007 (4.08% and 1.33%).

Soft-left candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon got 19.43%. The great gainer, however, was the Front National’s Marine Le Pen, with

21.43%, up on 17.9% in 2012 and 10.44% for the FN candidate in 2007.

Le Pen won only 5% of the vote in Paris; 7% in Rennes, Nantes, Bordeaux; 9% in Lyon; 13% in the whole Ile-de-France region including Paris; but 24% in Marseille, 25% in Nice, and more in small towns and villages.

Just ahead of Le Pen, and favoured to win the second-round run-off on 7 May, was Emmanuel Macron, a former minister in the current government (led by the Socialist Party) who split off to form his own “centre” neo-liberal movement, with 23.86%.

The “mainstream” left, the Socialist Party, had its chance in 2012, when it won elections by a clear majority — with some leftish policies which it then trashed in favour

of harsher neoliberalism.

The task now is to regroup the real left, and equip it to win a majority.

Not an easy task, but an urgent one. The lesson is that if the left dawdles and equivocates, in economic turmoil like today’s, then the right does not stand still.

The FN does not have the power to mobilise on the streets of a full-scale fascist movement. But Marine Le Pen herself is a fascist, surrounded by a cadre of fascists. France’s constitution gives the president great powers.

Even if Macron wins on 7 May, he promises worse than Hollande rather than better. Unless the left rebuilds as an independent force in time, the next presidential election will be even more scary.

French left takes stock

Groups on the French left have commented on the first-round presidential results, the second round coming on 7 May, and the parliamentary elections following on 11 and 18 June.

The Socialist Party and the Communist Party — and mainstream right candidate François Fillon — will vote on 7 May for Macron to stop Le Pen. Although his main base was the CP and other groups taking a similar attitude, Jean-Luc Mélenchon says he will consult his supporters on what to say about the second round.

Ensemble (left group, including some Trotskyists who split from the NPA in 2012, which supported Mélenchon)

Ensemble calls for mobilisation on the street on 1 May, and in voting against Le Pen on 7 May, to stop the far right gaining power.

At the same time, we will fight Emmanuel Macron’s project. Once Le Pen is eliminated, we must stop Macron constituting a majority in the National Assembly with the right wing of the Socialist Party and a section of the mainstream right around his ultra-neoliberal program, which will continue the policies of Hollande’s five years in worse form. Let’s pull together a left which stands up for itself.

NPA (New Anti-Capitalist Party, a successor to the Trotskyist LCR, which stood Philippe Poutou in the first round)

On Sunday 7 May, many people will want to block the FN by voting for Macron. We understand the desire to push back the mortal danger for all social progress and rights, especially for immigrants and those of immigrant origin, which the coming to power of Marine Le Pen would represent. But we insist that it is the policies of cuts and repression, especially when carried through by the supposed left in government, which are the cause of the rise of the FN and its disgusting ideas. Macron is not a barrier against the FN, and to push back that danger durably, there is no other answer than going back on the streets, against the far right, but also against all those who, like Macron, have introduced or want to introduce anti-social measures.

Nathalie Arthaud, candidate in the first round of the Trotskyist group Lutte Ouvrière

Politically-aware workers should reject voting for Marine Le Pen. But Macron, this former banker and minister, is just as much an enemy of the working class as Marine Le Pen...

As for me, I will cast a blank vote [on 7 May], giving my vote the

meaning of a rejection of Marine Le Pen without endorsing Macron...

Some of my voters will cast a blank vote like me. Others will spoil their ballot papers. Yet others will abstain. Some, maybe, will choose to vote for Macron, believing, wrongly, that by doing that they oppose the rise of the FN.

The main thing is to be aware that, whatever the result of the vote, the exploited, the retired, and unemployed, will have an enemy in the presidential palace.

Arguments pour la lutte sociale (a revolutionary socialist newsletter with whose editors we have friendly links)

Neither Le Pen nor Macron: this orientation [on the second round] does not play into the hands of Le Pen as both the partisans of “national unity” and comrades who see an immediate fascist danger are going to say, sincerely or not, because the orientation has immediate points of concretisation.

First, independent social struggle. Hundreds of thousands of demonstrators should intervene on 1 May with the slogan of abrogation of the El Khomri law and all their other current demands...

And, in the same process, let us start the political struggle for unitary and democratic candidatures [of the labour movement] in the legislative elections...

Two views on the second round

1: Martin Thomas

Marine Le Pen’s Front National does not have the mobilising power to install a fascist regime if she wins the presidency.

But Le Pen’s politics, and the FN top cadre around her, are fascist. The presidency will give them huge power to impose discrimination, heavy police powers, union-bashing policies, and re-raised frontiers between nations which will ricochet across Europe.

The mainstream neoliberals pave the way for Le Pen. The whole of the French left will mobilise on the streets on 1 May, and, one way or another, will seek to secure left-wing representation in the new National Assembly elected on 11-18 June to limit whichever president wins on 7 May.

On 7 May itself, in my view, workers can best serve the continuing struggle by using the only option available on the ballot paper to block Le Pen: vote Macron.

Macron is bad, and the neoliberal policies of a Macron presidency not curbed by strong left-wing remobilisation will bring an even greater fascist danger in a few years’ time. Le Pen is worse, and Le Pen as president on 8 May is worse than a danger of Le Pen as president in some years’ time.

It is a principle for us in elections to seek the maximum independent working-class intervention.

On 7 May we cannot stand or support candidates of the labour movement. Sometimes we shrug because the differences between bourgeois candidates are small and speculative. Sometimes we say that the “lesser-evil” bourgeois candidate is bound to win anyway, and in any case we are strong enough to make blank votes a real gesture of working-class independence.

The outcome is not certain. The revolutionary left is not strong enough to raise blank votes visibly above the random level. It would be nihilistic disregard for bourgeois democracy and bourgeois cosmopolitanism to deny the big difference between Macron’s routine neoliberalism and Le Pen’s fascistic chauvinism.

There is no Marxist principle against voting for a lesser-evil bourgeois candidate when it is impossible to have a labour-movement candidate. When the German Social Democracy was a Marxist party, before World War One, it routinely advised a vote for liberals against loyalists of Germany’s bureaucratic monarchy in run-offs when the socialists themselves had been eliminated. Left-wingers like Rosa Luxemburg and Franz Mehring did not dissent.

We tell workers: Le Pen is worse than Macron. And do we then say: you must not vote Macron, however much you indict him and organise against him. Once you vote you will forget your indictments?

Those workers could reply: if you are so unconfident of your own political firmness that you

dare not make an unusual step for fear of falling over, so be it.

But do not attribute your own weakness to us, or make us pay the price of a Le Pen presidency for that weakness of yours.

2: Ira Berkovic and Michael Johnson

A vote for Macron is not just, or even mostly, a vote for more open borders, a defence of Muslims and immigrants, and an expression of opposition towards protectionism and racism.

Macron is a former banker who wants to cut corporation tax to 25%, wants more flexible labour laws in the mold of the El Khomri Law, allowing companies to negotiate individual agreements with staff. His program is to reduce public spending by €60bn, cut 120,000 public sector jobs, and introduce greater “flexibility” in retirement age and the working week.

It is a continuation of the “liberalization” demanded by the French ruling-class which François Hollande’s Parti Socialiste was unable to deliver. Hence, the flocking of Hollande-Valls wing of the PS behind Macron, together with centrist François Bayrou and sections of the French centre-right.

Macron’s candidacy is a united front of the French establishment. Its neoliberal “reform” program will hit workers. A “critical” vote for this neoliberal programme will be indistinguishable from those who genuinely endorse Macron’s policy; both will be taken as legitimisation for further attacks on our class, and will serve to undermine the credibility of the revolutionary left as it rallies a fightback.

A vote for Macron could drive workers further in to the arms of the “anti-establishment” Front Nationale, who will continue to prey on the fears and insecurities of those suffering under capitalism.

And it risks sowing illusions in the neoliberal center and its capacity to rescue us from a resurgent populist right. Lots of people who will vote Macron, people the revolutionary left needs to reach, will vote Macron not on the basis that he is a crook, but with enthusiasm and illusions.

It is only the labour movement which can combine a defence of the gains of the neoliberal period — cultural cosmopolitanism, freer movement, economic integration — with a fight against the poverty, alienation and social distress it inevitably creates.

As against Le Pen, Macron is a “lesser evil” but it is incumbent on Marxists to resolutely assert working-class independence and hostility to both. Even on the points on which we agree with Macron, our “Yes” is not his “Yes”.

We say “Yes” to open borders, anti-racism and greater European integration but a resounding “No” to the capitalist nature of his programme, and even his capacity to defend those points on which we overlap.

Help us raise £20,000 to improve our website



We need to build a left that is open to debate and is serious about self-education.

Our website, including its extensive archive could help build a different kind of socialist culture — one where discussion and self-education are cherished.

From Trotskyist newspapers of the 1940s and 50s, to older Marxist classics, to discussion articles on feminism, national questions, religion and philosophy and resources such as guidelines for Marxist reading groups — it's all there on the Workers' Liberty website.

But to make our archive of real use we need professional help to make all content fully integrated, searchable by date and subject and optimised for mobile reading. We need to finance a website co-ordinator to ensure our news coverage is up to the minute and shared on social media. We want to raise £20,000 by our conference in November 2017. Any amount will help.

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Workers' Liberty comrade Joe Booth will be doing a sponsored 10 mile dog walk for the website fund on Sunday 11 June. Sponsor him at: bit.ly/2oGBwwd

The Socialist Party gives ground to nationalism

THE LEFT

By Ira Berkovic

At best, Hannah Sell's article "Brexit and the left" (*Socialism Today*, the magazine of the Socialist Party, Issue 207, April 2017) is a series of platitudinous banalities. At worst, it is a wretched concession to nationalism.

In a rare direct polemic against other group on the left (the Socialist Party prefer to plough their own sectarian furrow, acknowledging the existence of other tendencies only occasionally), Sell makes a number of claims about Workers' Liberty which range from the distorted to the straightforwardly untrue. She accuses us of "having consistently argued that the EU is progressive". This is not our position.

The institutional infrastructure of the European Union, like all capitalist institutions, is a class instrument, constructed to enforce the rule of capital. But the continental integration it brings with it provides a higher platform for working-class solidarity and united struggle than the hard right's alternative — a Europe of competing national-capitalist blocs, walled off behind high trade barriers and intensive immigration controls. That was the choice on offer in the 23 June referendum; that is why Workers' Liberty was for "remain".

She next accuses us of having "no concept of the limits to capitalism's ability to overcome the barrier of the nation state". In fact, we have repeatedly cautioned against the view that capitalism has bypassed the nation state entirely, echoing the arguments of Ellen Meiksins Wood and others. Rather, nation states themselves "globalise" by making themselves attractive sites for international investment, and plugging into interconnected world markets. This globalising logic creates objective, material basis for a greater degree of working-class unity than "national" working classes struggling solely against "their own" ruling class, behind barriers and borders.

Sell scoffs at the idea that capitalism might "carry through the task of the unification of Europe and that this would be 'progressive'", apparently impervious to the reality of the degree of European integration and unification capitalism has already achieved. To repeat: the existence of a single market, and the erosion of borders throughout substantial parts of Europe, provide an objectively higher, better, basis for working-class unity than the vision preferred by the right, and apparently by the Socialist Party, of rigidly delineated national-capitalist blocs. For that process to be reversed under pressure from economic nationalism and xenophobic "sovereignism" — currently the only meaningfully hegemonic forces behind the drive to break up the EU — would certainly not be "progressive".

The article finishes by repeating the Socialist Party's wretched position on immigration — that is, an unquestioning acceptance of the idea, which does not survive contact with evidence, that migrant labour straightforwardly depresses pay and conditions for domestic labour, and that the solution to this is to apply controls at the border.

Migrant workers are as much part of our class as British workers. Our politics must be

as much for them as for British workers. We must defend their rights — their rights to migrate freely and safely, free from the violence of border controls, and their right to legally seek work — as vociferously as we defend the wages, terms, and conditions of domestic labour. To adopt any other position necessarily implied that the rights of British workers come first, simply by dint of the fact that they are British. There is no other word for this but "nationalism".

Sell's article says that "the only way to push back is for a united struggle of all workers." Quite so. But in the context of what is essentially a polemic *against* a policy of free movement, and *for* restrictions on immigration, it is plain that, for the Socialist Party, "united struggle" is not the "only way to push back"; they also favour legislative mechanisms to restrict immigration.

Sell cites the 2009 Lindsey oil refinery strike, where workers protested at bosses' use of Italian migrant labour on terms that undermined collectively-negotiated agreements, as an example of the kind of struggle necessary.

That strike began as a strike demanding "British jobs for British workers". Undoubtedly the Socialist Party comrade involved did play an important role in shifting the dispute away from such racist slogans and onto politically healthier terrain. But those who, while supporting the Lindsey workers' fight for national agreements to be respected, sounded a note of caution about the risk of viewing migrant workers as the enemy, were right to do so.

MISSING

Sell quotes Giorgio Cremaschi, leader of the Italian union Fiom, supporting the strike, but none of the Italian migrant workers themselves. Migrant workers' agency is missing from the Socialist Party's picture; the implication is that "united struggle" in fact means struggles by British workers against the way migrant labour is "used".

The fact remains that the Lindsey scenario is rare. There, a unionised domestic workforce, with collectively-negotiated national agreements, saw their employer physically bus in migrant workers and employ them on terms outside the existing agreements. This is not the basis on which any significant proportion of migrant labour comes to Britain — or, to use the Socialist Party's schema in which migrants are passive instruments of neo-liberalism with no agency of their own, "is brought". Ending free movement, which is the Socialist Party's policy, would not do anything to meaningfully protect trade union agreements. It would, however, significantly disadvantage working-class people from EU countries attempting to move to make a better life for themselves and their families.

The Socialist Party give their pro-immigration controls position a labour-movement gloss by claiming that the "control" they favour is a kind of (presumably state-enforced) closed shop, whereby employers wishing to "recruit abroad" must be "covered by a proper trade union agreement or by sectoral collective bargaining". But the vast majority of migrant labour does not consist of workers directly "recruited abroad", but of workers who come to Britain, sometimes as a result of acute poverty and lack of opportunity in their countries of origin, *looking for*



work. Does the Socialist Party propose to have border police checking union cards at Dover? Should we expect to see Socialist Party delegates at Britain's airports and docks, telling migrant workers — the very people who, in previous generations, help lay the foundations for our modern labour movement — that employers will use them to undercut British workers, and that the class conscious thing to do would be to get back on the plane or boat and go home?

All workers — local and migrant — should be "covered by a proper trade union agreement or by sectoral collective bargaining", but this will be imposed on employers through class struggle. To propose it as policy we want the existing state, with its Tory administration, to adopt as a fix for a perceived immigration "problem" is a political contortion undertaken by a tendency visibly uncomfortable with the implications of its own perspective.

The Socialist Party should take some responsibility for the logic of its position. Be honest! Just say it, comrades: you think immigration depresses pay and conditions for domestic workers, and to solve this problem, you think there should be less immigration. That is the substance of your view. No amount of gloss, nor any amount of reassurances that you do not consider migrant workers to be at "fault", as Sell puts it in the article, change that fundamental fact.

Workers' Liberty takes a different view. Our view is that no human being should be "illegal". Our view is that the right to move freely, including to move between states, is a fundamental human right, and that restrictions on that right cannot be imposed except by state violence. Have employers sometimes attempted to "use" migrant labour to lower their costs? Of course — just as some employers historically exploited the entry of women into the workforce to drive down wages by paying them less than men.

In proposing restrictions on immigration, however packaged and presented, the Socialist Party echo the Lassalleans of the 19th century who opposed women's entry into the workforce on the basis that they would be "used" to undercut existing, male, workers' wages.

The free movement that exists between EU member states should be extended, not restricted. Bosses' use of migrant labour to undercut local labour should be met with common struggle and demands for levelling up, not calls to end free movement.

By arguing that the rights of British workers can be protected by restricting the rights of migrant workers, the Socialist Party give ground to nationalism.



Vote Labour, prepare to fight!

Workers' Liberty members, including those expelled from Labour by the party bureaucracy, will be out campaigning in the next six weeks for a Labour victory in the 8 June General Election.

The hopeful signs are that we will be campaigning alongside many of the half-million or so people who have signed up as Labour members or supporters since 2015.

That surge in activity will come from many who were enthused by Jeremy Corbyn's Labour leadership campaigns but have felt disappointed that Corbyn has not fought for the policies on which he won the leadership.

They understand that no matter how daunting the circumstances of the election, fighting to get rid of the Tories, or even to prevent a huge Tory landslide, is no small matter. We also know that if Labour loses badly, Corbyn will be replaced with a much more right-wing leader. That prospect, too, is no small matter.

A huge Tory landslide will strengthen their

ability to impose a viciously nationalist and anti-working class agenda. Pushing back against that prospect means preserving and extending the political hopes of many millions represented by Corbyn's leadership and the potential of a political alternative to the Tories.

Corbyn should organise big rallies around the country, to recapture some of the excitement of his leadership campaigns, bring people together and build confidence for a continuing fight.

The Party should now campaign on its policies — of rail renationalisation, free education, council house-building, a £10 an hour minimum wage, reversing NHS privatisation. We fight for those things now and after 8 June, whatever the result of the election.

The left needs to push Labour to emphasise the best, boldest, and most radical of existing policies and campaign for them vigorously. We should also argue for Labour to campaign for left-wing policies agreed by its conference

but not yet taken up, like public provision of social care and restoring the right to strike in solidarity with other workers.

And socialists should use the general election to strengthen the case for even more radical anti-capitalist and socialist policies like expropriating the banks.

We need to fight to establish and embed the idea that socialist — indeed all left-wing and democratic — politics is about politically convincing and persuading people, shifting the political consensus. After Corbyn's first Labour leadership contest, we argued that:

"...a left-wing Labour Party could and would have to inform, shape, educate and re-educate 'public opinion'. That is what a proper opposition party does. A serious political party is not, should not be, what the Blair-Thatcherite Labour Party now is — an election machine to install venal careerists in ministerial office... The ideas, norms, consequences and ideology of market capitalism have not been contested by the political labour movement. All that can now be changed..."

Seeking to educate and shift public opinion, rather than manoeuvring cleverly or not-so-cleverly, is where Corbyn has fallen down — not just because it is difficult, but for want of trying.

A labour movement that fights hard to reshape opinion should remain our minimal goal. Organising and mobilising as hard as we can for a Labour victory on 8 June is the best starting point for this on-going fight.

So that we progress in rebuilding the labour movement socialists need to see this election not just as a mechanical exercise of "getting out the Labour vote" — finding out whether a person will vote Labour, collecting information, and going on to the next house.

This election should be an opportunity to have political conversations and to politicise Labour supporters, winning them to the idea that ongoing socialist activity is valuable and necessary.

That is why campaigning should not be counterposed to democratic organising or political debate. With most local Labour Parties shutting down for the duration, Momentum groups should meet and use the election to rally and organise people for campaigning, and to discuss Labour's programme and our political demands.

This too will prepare the ground for the broader, more political labour movement we seek to build for the future.

Labour must fight Tories over Brexit!

This election has been pitched by the Tories as a referendum on Brexit. Labour needs a clear policy on that.

In the first place Labour cannot afford to ignore the issue, or effectively ignore the issue, by campaigning on everything but Brexit. Many voters on both sides of the European referendum debate see the issue as important.

Moreover the Labour Party cannot continue as it has done, to give the Tories a free hand to shape the debate on Brexit. Far from "holding the Tories to account" they have voted with the Tories in Parliament, for instance, on triggering Article 50.

Labour must make good on the words of Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell, who said last October: "By pulling up the drawbridge and tearing up longstanding ties to Europe, we will inflict huge and unnecessary pain on our society... a hard-line Tory minority believe [in] the fantasy of turning our whole country into a giant off-shore tax haven, with rock-bottom wages and no public services. It is a nightmare vision that I believe would be rejected by the majority of people who live here".

Labour should be convincing people, including those who voted for Brexit last 23 June, that the Tory vision of Brexit, should be rejected.

A key debate is over migration. Labour should not shy away from this debate. It should defend EU nationals right to stay in this country and argue against May's re-stated pledge to push down net immigration, despite the risk of collapsing the economy and leaving vital services like the NHS understaffed.

Labour should be clear ending free movement in Europe is a terrible step backwards, a blow to unity between workers of different countries and origins, and paves the way for trashing workers' and other rights which entered British law from the EU.

There is a real danger that the Liberal Democrats will succeed in pitching themselves as the main opposition to the Tories on Brexit, with Labour caught looking incoherent in the middle.

Even on the basis of its existing policy, Labour could argue for opposition to the Tories' Brexit plans, for defence of free movement and migrants' rights, for remaining in the single market. We should fight for this.

Build Labour into a workers' party Rebuild the labour movement

The intense election activity, drawing in a lot of people who have not yet come to meetings, has the potential to alter the longer-term shape of the Labour Party and the labour movement.

We can make it a much broader movement of activists, with local parties having deeper roots in communities and a higher level of political activity.

We also need to ensure that all sections of the labour movement — Momentum groups, union branches, Labour Clubs, Young Labour groups — and all activists are mobilised. In the first place Labour needs every activist it can get!

In addition to launching a membership drive, the party should stop wasting members' and affiliates' money on paying officials to witch-hunt the left, put a stop to expulsions of socialists for being socialists and extend an amnesty to those who have been expelled.

No selections?

The snap general election has stopped local Labour Parties organising trigger ballots so sitting MPs can be reselected or selecting their own candidates in vacant seats.

A document sent to all CLP secretaries states: The NEC has agreed MPs will be re-elected automatically if they wish to stand again. Vacancies will be advertised on Friday 21 April and after close of applications on Sunday 23 April will be selected directly by panels of the National Executive and Re-

gional Board members.

It will be simply impossible to hold trigger ballots, selection hustings and meetings in the 631 Parliamentary constituencies in the given timescale."

By Tuesday 2 May all candidates will be in place. The rumour is that there has been some deal made between the Leader's office and the right of the party to split the seats to their preferred candidates on a 50/50 basis. Labour members have been given less say over their choice of candidates than in many Conservative associations!

The process of democratising and transforming the Party must continue after the election.

The SNP reality

By Dale Street

In the 2015 general election the Scottish Nationalist Party lied, lied and lied again. They helped the Tories win the election. They cannot be allowed to get away with doing the same in 2017.

"The only way to lock the Tories out of 10 Downing Street is to vote SNP on 7 May," said the SNP. The reality: while the SNP won 56 seats, a Tory-Lib-Dem coalition was replaced by a Tory government with an absolute majority.

"The only way to force Labour back to its roots is to vote SNP," claimed an SNP election leaflet. The reality: while Labour moved left and elected Corbyn as its leader — without any assistance from the SNP — the SNP dismissing Labour as "unelectable".

"It's time to put fairness and equality back on the agenda," claimed the same leaflet. The reality: in Scotland, where the SNP had held power for ten years, child poverty, educational inequalities, and social and economic inequalities have increased.

"The SNP will never stop doing our best to make Scotland's NHS the very best," claimed another SNP election leaflet. The reality: health is a devolved issue, and the SNP's record is one of shortages of GPs, shortages of nurses, longer waiting times for A&E treatment, and missed targets.

TAX

"The SNP will restore the 50p income tax rate for those earning more than £150,000," promised the SNP manifesto.

The reality: in the 2014 referendum the SNP had promised no tax rises in an independent Scotland, and in 2016 the SNP in Holyrood voted against a 50p income tax rate.

"A vote for the SNP is not a vote for another referendum. It is ultimately up to the Scottish people. I can't impose it on the people against their will," said Sturgeon. The reality: non-stop campaigning for a second referendum by the SNP, despite opposition from the majority of Scottish people.

The SNP would make a Labour government "bolder and better" because "if you hold the balance (in a hung Parliament), then you hold the power" claimed Sturgeon and Salmond. The reality: The Tories responded to Scottish nationalism by whipping up English nationalism and won the election.

The SNP election strategy in 2015 was to portray Labour as "Red Tories", even though the SNP had voted with the Tories in seven out of ten votes under the last Labour government, and even though its first Holyrood government had depended on Tory votes for survival.

It portrayed itself as the "true" champions of what Labour used to stand for — by, fairly literally, cutting and pasting the Labour election manifesto and adopting it as their own, even though the manifesto consisted of policies which the SNP had vigorously opposed in the 2014 referendum.

And, above all, the SNP waved a flag: "My vow is to make Scotland stronger at

Westminster," said Sturgeon, "this election is about making Scotland stronger, this is a manifesto to make Scotland stronger at Westminster, we will make the your (the Scottish people's) voice heard more loudly and clearly than it has ever been heard before at Westminster."

Sturgeon initially proposed another "progressive alliance": "If the parliamentary arithmetic lends itself to the SNP being part of a progressive alliance to keep the Tories out of government, then the SNP will be part of that, as we said in 2015."

That lasted all of 24 hours. Then Sturgeon switched to a full-scale offensive against her allies of, literally, only yesterday. Labour's vote in Westminster for a general election was a case of turkeys voting for Christmas, said Sturgeon. Corbyn "ain't going anywhere near Number 10 Downing Street, on his own or with the help of anyone else."

It was "utterly shameful and disgraceful" that Labour had "allowed itself" to fall so far behind the Tories in opinion polls. That was "Labour's failure and is an utter disgrace." Speaking at the STUC congress, Sturgeon said the election in Scotland was "a two-horse race between the SNP and hard-line Tories."

Writing off Labour and writing off the election result as a foregone conclusion is the flipside of nationalist flagwaving. Although the SNP has singularly failed to do so for the past two years, it promises, yet again, to be the only party which will Stand Up for Scotland. "If people in Scotland want an effective, strong opposition to a Tory government, they won't get it from unelectable Labour, they won't get it from the Lib Dems who still say they would support a Tory government. They will only get it from the SNP."

Scottish politics in recent years has been a textbook example of how poisonous the forces of nationalism are in general and the SNP in particular. The SNP has worked consistently to polarise politics around national identity. Opponents of Scottish independence have been labelled as "anti-Scottish", "Quislings" and "traitors to their country" who "talk Scotland down".

It has not used its powers at Holyrood, to pay for public services, for example, or to scrap the "rape clause" that it now opposes. In fact, the SNP has not passed any new legislation in over a year.

What distinguishes SNP Scottish nationalism is not that it is "civic and joyous". What distinguishes SNP nationalism is that whereas other nationalisms seek to unite the nation they claim to represent, SNP nationalism polarises the Scottish nation — between those with a purely Scottish identity and those with a British-Scottish identity.

The SNP has sought to rally people round a flag. Unsurprisingly, this leads to other people rallying round a different flag. The result: a surge in support for the Scottish Tories.

The optimum outcome of this general election for the SNP is the crushing of the Labour Party, a Tory government with an overwhelming majority, and a big vote for the SNP in Scotland.

Reverse the r

By Martin Thomas

The Resolution Foundation, a statistical think-tank, reported in March on the economic prospects if the Tories win on 8 June.

"If nothing is done to change [the] outlook... [2015-20] will go down as being the worst [period] on record for income growth in the bottom half of the income distribution.

"It will also represent the biggest rise in inequality since the end of the 1980s".

The toxic mix comes from low wage growth — which the government's own Office for Budgetary Responsibility predicts — and a great wave of pre-programmed cuts in

working-age welfare benefits.

The percentage of children living in poverty, which soared from 18% to 33% in the Thatcher 1980s, then decreased from 34% to 27% in the Blair-Brown years, has been rising steadily since 2010 and is set to rise further. Meanwhile profits are rocketing.

It is impossible to calculate the effects of hard Brexit in detail, but certain that it will add to the squeeze on the worse-off.

The pound's exchange rate falling relative to other currencies, as it has done already, will increase inflation. New trade barriers will increase costs and depress production.

Loss of EU migrant workers who staff public services, and pay a lot more into public budgets, in taxes, than they take out, will in-

Does £70,000 make you rich?

By Charlotte Zalens

Individuals who earn £70,000 are in the top 5% of UK earners. Yet when Labour's Shadow Chancellor said that people earning over £70,000 were rich he was met with incredulity and was said to be "out of touch".

Data published by HMRC in March show that the median pre-tax income in the UK is around £22,400. Someone working 38 hours a week on the government's National Living Wage earns £14,800 before tax. Households in the bottom 20% of the population have on average an average "equivalised" income per head after tax of £10,000 (2015-6). So who is really out of touch here?

Is it that labelling an income of £70,000 rich risks highlighting the uncomfortable truth of just how little most people earn by comparison?

Perhaps it is also because we realise just how high some earnings are that we think £70,000 isn't rich? How can £70,000 be rich when an investment banker takes home several million a year in bonuses on top of a basic salary?

Income inequality in the UK is higher than many other similar developed countries. But income inequality at the top of the scale is bigger than it is lower down the scale.

The top 1% have incomes substantially higher than the rest of those in the top 10%. In 2016, the top 1% had an average income of £271,888 and the top 0.1% had an average

income of just over £1 million. The graph (printed here) shows how incomes go up in huge leaps at the top of the scale. The bottom fifth of earners in the UK share only 8% of total income, while the top fifth have 40%.

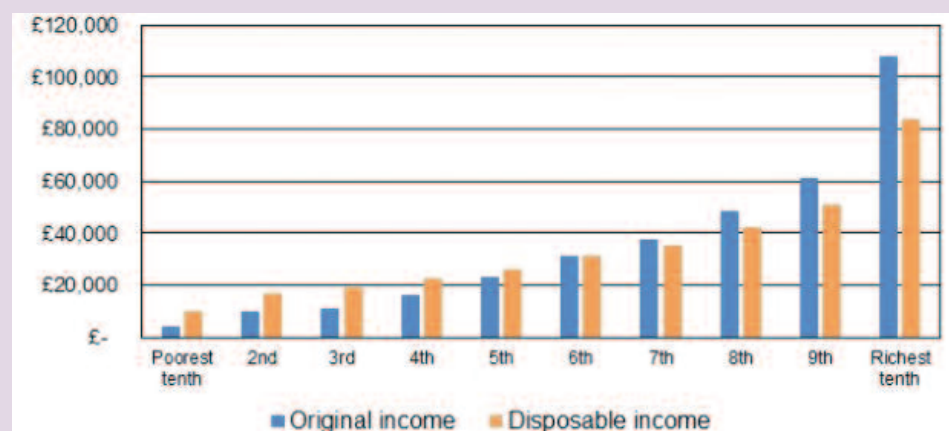
But what sort of people earn £70,000? Is it really that out of the ordinary? Teachers not in management earn £38,250 (£46,800 in London) at the top of the pay scale. Nurses earn on average £23,300. Plumbers earn on average £30,000. Tube drivers (much derided by the press for their high pay) earn a maximum of £60,000.

That is not to say that standards of living for those earning £70,000 are at the super-rich yacht-owners end of the scale, or that the median earner has a comfortable level of living. The median wage gives you a *low* standard of living. The result of that situation — four million children in the UK are living in households in poverty.

What those earning £70,000 consider normal are things we should expect to be normal for *everyone* — a secure living situation, enough money to have decent food, money for leisure activities, access to culture, education, holidays. But these things are not the normal for most.

There is no reason that more people could not be earning much closer to £70,000. Real wages in the UK are still 4% below pre-crisis level. In some sectors such as health and social care they are 6-7% below.

To help us achieve that we need more and better paid public service jobs, increasing the minimum wage, and introducing a maximum wage cap.



ise in inequality!

crease pressure for social cuts.

Against that bleak Tory future, Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party has proposed:

- Introduce a real Living Wage of £10 per hour and give all workers full rights from day one.
- Establish a new National Investment Bank and Regional Development Banks.
- Always give the NHS the money it needs... integrate health and social care.
- Reintroduce an Education Maintenance Allowance and maintenance grants for students from low and middle-income backgrounds.
- Build more than a million new homes in five years, with at least half of them for social rent.

Those are the points in briefing notes already put out by the Labour leadership, though deliberately sidelined by some right-wing Labour MPs for their local campaigns: bit.ly/lp-brief.

They are entirely and immediately feasible, so long as:

- Labour wins the election
- the election campaign is used to expand and integrate Labour's working-class membership, and the party is opened up to make it a real workers' party capable of sustaining a Labour government against ruling-class pressure and pushing it to keep to its pledges
- the revival of the Labour Party is used as a lever to rebuild the labour movement from the workplace upwards.

The policy needs to be rounded out, in the first place by a clear Labour stand against hard Brexit.

Some expansion of public spending can and even should be covered by government borrowing. John McDonnell has given more pledges of "fiscal responsibility" than he should have done. Unless a government is flexible with borrowing, economic shocks, certain in a capitalist world, can only be accommodated by social cuts. That approach is as destructive as an individual starving themselves into illness, and losing their home, instead of borrowing (if they can), when they suddenly hit misfortune.

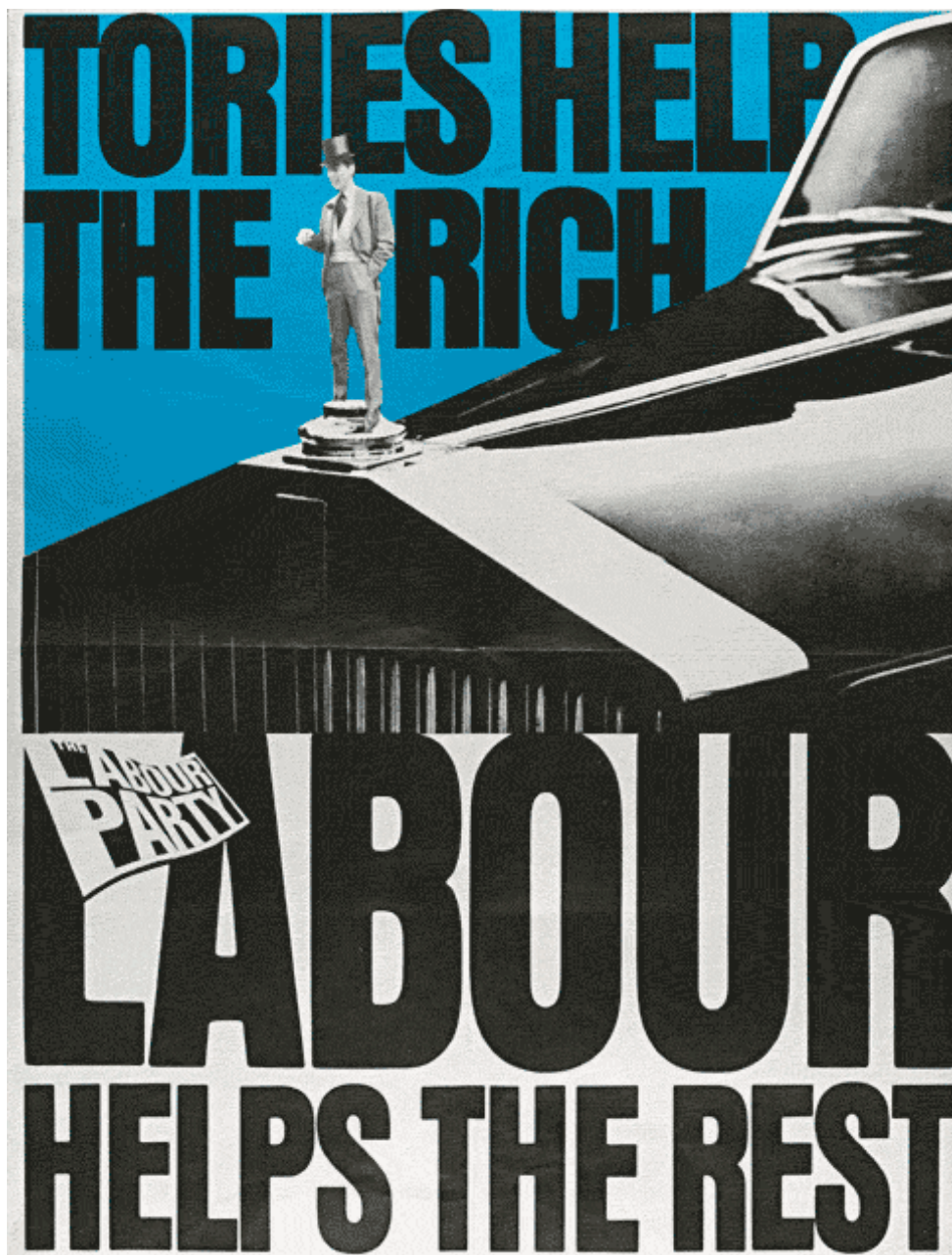
The National Investment Bank means a publicly-owned bank able to borrow more cheaply than commercial banks, and lending for infrastructure and industrial projects. The Labour leaders say that would increase economic growth.

It is not a bad idea, but it is very far from a cure-all.

The model is probably the KfW, the German state's federal investment bank, set up under the Marshall Plan in the 1940s. It's a safe, conservative model, in no way anti-capitalist or socialist. The current chair of the Supervisory Board is German finance minister Wolfgang Schäuble, Europe's sternest austerity-hawk and central to the crushing of the anti-austerity rebellion in Greece.

Higher taxes will be necessary as well as borrowing and the NIB, especially if Labour also reverses planned cuts in school budgets and welfare benefits, the Tories' semi-freeze on public sector pay, and the cuts in local government, as it should.

John McDonnell has talked of raising tax



rates for people on more than £90,000 or £100,000 a year.

Since Thatcher, the top rates of income tax have been drastically cut, and taxes on consumption which hit the poor more than the rich — like VAT — have been increased. So by 2013-4 the bottom 10% in Britain were paying 45% of their income in tax; all other deciles, 30 to 35%; and the top 10%, 35%.

"New Labour" used to say that in a globalised world it is impossible to raise taxes on businesses or on the well-off, because they will move their money to a lower-tax area.

In fact, even with globalisation, tax rates vary seriously between countries. Personal tax rates on high incomes range from 60% in Denmark to 19% in Slovakia; corporate taxes range from 45% in Japan to 12.5% in Ireland. "Globalisation" in general could not stop a British government raising its tax rates on the rich to the upper ends of those ranges.

Labour should make a definite commitment to tax the rich, including taxes on wealth as well as income.

Labour has also promised to raise funds by cutting tax evasion and tax avoidance by the rich and by big business. That is good; but as long as the decisive piles of wealth remain in the hands of the plutocratic few, not under social control, the rich will always evade

taxes, beyond a certain point.

Really to secure the resources to quash inequality, a Labour government would need public ownership and democratic control over major piles of wealth.

Public ownership of the banks has been official TUC policy since it was proposed by the Fire Brigades Union in 2012, but left dormant. We should fight to activate it, and make it active Labour policy too.

The banks and high finance are central to the economy's functioning, and their greed for profit has been central to the economic chaos which has engulfed us since 2008.

Banking should become a unified, democratically run public service providing banking, pensions and mortgages for everyone who needs them, and funds and resources for investment in public services and all areas of social need — instead of acting as an engine to devastate them and promote inequality.

Labour is likely to pledge to renationalise rail. It should also renationalise utilities — for example, nationalise the Big Six energy companies, and renationalise Royal Mail.

And a full charter of trade-union rights — not just the repeal of the Tories' Trade Union Act — is necessary if workers are to be able to reverse inequalities imposed over recent decades.

No “Progressive Alliances”!

By Simon Nelson

The snap election and Labour's position in the polls has once raised the idea of a Progressive Alliance and coordinated tactical voting.

Compass, the “centre left” think tank, Tony Blair, and investment manager Gina Miller have all proposed some kind of organisation aimed at stopping hard Brexit. Gina Miller, who brought the court case that forced a vote on Article 50, was able to crowdfund almost £300,000 in 48 hours to support such an initiative.

Their argument: the majority of the population did not vote for a hard Brexit. The traditional opposition to the Tories, the Labour Party, is not likely to win the election, and is split on the issue of how to tackle Brexit. It is therefore important to get a Parliamentary majority against Brexit.

This means Labour, the Lib Dems, SNP, Plaid Cymru, SDLP and Greens not standing against each other in certain seats, and backing whoever is the most likely candidate that will oppose a hard Brexit.

Tony Blair has even said he is tempted to come back into British politics to oppose a hard Brexit. (Which should be the kiss of the death for the proposal). Blair says he himself will vote Labour, but to stop a hard Brexit and for an effective chance to veto or vote down any deal that does not safeguard, prosperity, jobs and trade, Brexit must be the issue the election is fought on.

Blair is right that Labour's position on Brexit is unclear. Labour even voted in Parliament to allow the Tories to take Britain out of the single market, though it now says it wants arrangements as good as the single market. But Blair's starting point is that Labour should *not* campaign on the NHS or school cuts, not just because he believes they cannot win an election, but because he is actively opposed to some of Labour's current policies. Ironically Blair's call for the potential backing of other parties should leave him open to expulsion according to the rules (as they are currently implemented). However, these rules are used almost solely against the left.

Chuka Umunna, one time leadership contender, a figure on the hard right of the party, and former Compass staffer, surprisingly came out against Blair:

“Tony Blair is wrong... No ifs, no buts: voting Labour and maximising our position in Parliament is the best way to stop Theresa May's hard Brexit. What the Liberal Democrats and Conservatives have done to our public services in government since 2010 and the cuts to support for those on low incomes, the disabled and others in need is utterly unforgivable. Whatever common ground Labour people may have with them on Brexit, we cannot ignore or forgive this.”

Labour must have a clearer policy on fighting hard Brexit. At the same time activists must oppose moves to tie the Labour Party and by extension the labour movement to anti-working class forces; it is a political dead end.

Darcus Howe on Black Power

A new TV drama — ‘Guerilla’ — tells the story of the British Black Panthers. Long-time black and left activist Darcus Howe, who recently died, was a founder member of the group and consultant for the show. In this interview from 1995 Howe discussed the politics of “black power” with Dan Katz.

DH: The Panthers have been grossly misrepresented in political circles.

They were an intensely revolutionary organisation, the largest non-establishment political party ever to exist in America — larger than the Communist Party or any left-wing group. There were thousands of them all over the United States. They staked their lives in order to get change in the United States.

For me the three great figures of the twentieth century are Lenin, Mao and Malcolm X. With each of these leaders a new class moved forward: Lenin led the workers, Mao led the peasants, and the modern unemployed came on to the historical stage led by Malcolm X. The first time we saw it was when Malcolm X surrounded the police station in Harlem. Then we could see the unemployed: who are these people? what do they want? Lenin was not a worker and Mao was not a peasant. But one of the most important things about Malcolm, Huey P Newton and George Jackson was that they were from the urban unemployed. For the first time in history the class produced its own leaders. That to me is another strength. The Panthers were deeply rooted in the black, urban unemployed. People learned to read and write in jail. Stokely Carmichael and James Forman were perhaps some of the few who were educated people. A lot were just street guys and the only discipline came from the Little Red Book. They were Maoists.

DK: I can’t be expected to like Mao given that he killed and jailed people like me. But Mao did have the big political picture. The Panthers didn’t.

DH: Oh, but they did! They had a great conception of international revolution. They had no power other than that of the gun. They could not go out on strike. Their moral code and behaviour cut them off from the bible-toting mass of black workers. In some places there were wonderful alliances. In Detroit, where the black working class was strong in the factories, they had links with the workers. In California they aligned with hippy students. The state came down on all of them. They did some remarkable things. They challenged the Democratic Party at their Chicago convention. They terrified the establishment.

DK: Lenin developed a sophisticated world view. Huey Newton did not. The Panthers were tremendously brave and heroic but I’m not going to pretend they were very political. They had a 10 Point Programme, but how would it be carried out?

DH: No, that’s not right at all. Huey quoted Lenin a great deal. Their problem was this: they thought that the unemployed youth were the class to lead the revolution. And that was an enormous mistake. They substituted a section of the class for the whole class. The unemployed are not only just a part of the working class but are also a very vulnerable section of the class. They are not disciplined by production, and live from day-to-day making a living in any way they



Darcus Howe speaking at an anti-fascist rally, Lewisham 1977

can. Ten guys would be hustling in a syndicate. The police hold one, give him thousands of dollars, and the rest go to jail. Or he sets them up to get killed. That’s how they live. And the Panthers could never transcend that.

DK: When Lenin was alive there was no cult of Lenin. But when Huey Newton was the Panthers leader, there was a cult of Huey. There was also a cult of the gun and the cult of violence.

DH: The cult of the gun is easily explainable. If you were shot at every day, what would you do? The Panthers had no other alternative.

DK: For Lenin the use of violence was subordinate to political ends: human liberation. The Panthers glorified violence. It was part of their political character.

DH: Lenin as an individual did not face the police shooting at him every day. Police brutality was part of the Panthers’ cultural life. I can easily understand how they felt. You have to understand that! They were faced with a military struggle.

DK: But such a struggle could not win.

DH: It didn’t win. That’s a fact. Hoover and the FBI destroyed them with the Cointelpro programme.

DK: The Bolsheviks settled their disputes by argument. The Panthers regularly solved arguments amongst themselves with violence.

DH: I’m not picking an argument with you. I just think it is ahistorical and facile to look back with hindsight and say that. That’s just how they were! The Panthers were central to the period following the break up of feudalism in the Southern States of America. And for me it remains one of the most important historical landmarks in American politics.

UK PANTHERS

DK: You have used criticisms that Huey Newton used against cultural nationalists: that if black people are good and white people are bad then that lets Papa Doc and African dictators off the hook. Is Newton where you got this view from?

DH: I was part of forming that conception. I was one of the most listened to leaders amongst black people in Britain at the time — especially young blacks.

I was an overseas member of the Student Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee (SNCC), which I joined in the late 1960s. The Panthers were set up in London in the early

70s. We took their name. We took their dress. We had a 10 Point programme. But we were not Maoists.

We expelled and suspended people for being Maoists. We thought they were divisive. We did not have cultural nationalists. And we were not with the Labour Party either! We had some relations with the [Trotskyist] IMG.

In the Panthers there were various currents. But there was a very powerful leadership. Members could not just go around doing what they wanted — unless you were George Jackson, perhaps the brightest of them all. I spoke on platforms alongside Stokely Carmichael, Bobby Seale and Eldridge Cleaver as the UK representative. So I knew the organisation pretty well.

I’ve a great place in my heart for Huey. The failure of a great organisation like the Panthers left its mark. The pressure he was under as a result of the defeat broke him. He was such a nice young fellow. The drugs he took — that was a long time after the Panthers had collapsed.

DK: What were the London Panthers like?

DH: We had about 250 members. But there was no question about seizing power — as they put it in the US. The slogan was: come what may we’re here to stay! That was the battle as we defined it. We wanted an end to the police harassing us: very specific demands. It was not a national struggle. We wanted a bit more space and more democratic rights within the country. This was not just an organisation of Africans and people from the Caribbean. Farrukh Dhondy was on the central committee. We had quite a number of Asians and strong relations with the Indian Workers Association.

DK: What about the limitations of this type of organisation? The Panthers were based on a minority — the lumpen youth — of a minority community.

DH: Using the term minority is very dangerous. Until 1959 the South existed on serfdom and the cotton economy. Then they discovered synthetic fibres. The cotton plantation owners had to intensify pressure on the serfs.

And when I say “serf” I mean it accurately. The serfs worked for the landowner. And the landowner was helped by the local power structure. We could not vote. We were not allowed to, because in many areas we were in the majority: during the Reconstruction period after the Civil War we had had our own representatives elected to Congress.

That is how millions lived in the South. Then black people simply started walking off the land, helped by black and white students from the North.

Everyone says it was just Martin Luther-King. Not so! There were mass revolts from below.

DK: The Black Power slogan only came in ‘66... and what did it mean? I understand the demand for the right to vote. But Stokely Carmichael meant more by Black Power than that. But the demand was so unclear that

anyone could be for Black Power — Nixon was for Black Power in 1968 — he meant black capitalism.

DH: There have been many slogans in world history. Of them all I think Black Power is one of the best. You had to be there to experience Black Power. It was not simply a nationalist struggle — the same as the struggle in Ghana or in India — it was just a demand for control over your own life.

DK: The French were a privileged minority in Algeria — someone else’s country — and the British were the same in India. But the Black Americans were firstly — basically — Americans and secondly a minority.

DH: The French ruled in Algeria, the blacks did not rule anywhere.

DK: The struggles were not the same. The question in Algeria was self-government for the Algerians. The matter was not self-government for Black Americans.

DH: Oh yes it was! Alabama, Mississippi and Atlanta are now ruled by Blacks. Now the whole situation is exposed: black people are divided into classes.

DK: So your argument is that this nationalist struggle was necessary in order to clear the way for class politics.

DH: Absolutely correct! The Panthers, Martin Luther-King and Malcolm X transformed America in a way that Eisenhower, Nixon and Reagan never did. Martin Luther-King, under pressure of the mass, moved to the left. At the end of his life he was supporting workers’ struggles — and that is when they killed him. A lot of people living in the United States are not American in the way that blacks are. There are three real sets of Americans: the Native Americans, the blacks and the white descendants of the people who came over in the Mayflower. Black people built the US and they have a sense that they did.

DK: The good thing about Martin Luther-King is that ... he wanted people to be treated as human beings — as distinct to some of the more radical nationalist currents who wanted to stress and cultivate existing black-white divisions. In between Martin Luther-King and the other end of the spectrum of black politics — the cultural nationalists — you have the Panthers and Malcolm X after ‘64.

DH: And Darcus Howe. I am irredeemably black. I do not exploit it for political ends. But I am aware of black struggle. If I was not aware of it I would die.

In America blacks are always being given trouble. Have you lived there? You talk about the States with a British sensibility, which is a serious problem. There are millions of blacks in the United States who do not meet whites at all, except the police. They have no relations with whites, they have no white friends, they do not live in the same areas. When you say “black community” in the US, you mean exactly that. If you walk down the street in Manhattan, at night, and a white woman sees you walking towards you, she bolts! In Harlem you may see one or two whites, because there is a cultural space there — but not after 5 o’clock. There are myths on both sides. But when one side has the power, the myths can be established for real.

DK: It’s a mess.

DH: Yes, an enormous mess. And the result is that America has lost out. A lot of the enormous creative power of black people has been lost to America.

Russian lessons for today's workers

Vicki Morris reviews *The Russian Revolution: when workers took power* by Paul Vernadsky

It is 100 years since the Russian Revolution, the most important event in working class history, when the workers of a country, Russia, took their country over.

Albeit briefly they ran that country in their interests, and extended support to workers in other countries who wanted to do the same.

This is our chance to look at that event again, celebrate it, and think what lessons it can teach us today. Paul Vernadsky's book *The Russian Revolution: when workers took power* is a useful way to do all of those things.

The book includes a narrative of the revolution, a study of the Bolsheviks who organised and led the revolution, debates about issues raised in and after the revolution, and an unflinching examination of "what went wrong" — how and why the revolution was usurped by Stalinism.

The book comes with a study guide to help organise reading groups and get the most from your reading. Group discussion can lead to a greater understanding than we get from reading the book on our own. And it can lead to group action, as we organise activity inspired by the lessons we learn.

Discussing this history in groups is a practice that the Bolsheviks would recognise and applaud. The purpose — to organise a material force, a party, to give life to revolutionary ideas — was the essence of Bolshevism.

The book gives an inspiring account of the evolution of the Russian communist movement before, throughout and after 1917. It explores in detail their democratic culture and their debates at home and with socialists abroad.

Those debates, far from being mere academic talking shops or intellectual posturing, prepared the Bolsheviks to organise and take action to lead the workers to power in 1917.

Vernadsky addresses head on the negative impact that the strains of civil war following the revolution had on that democratic culture. He concludes, however, that there was nothing inevitable about the decay of the workers' revolution per se, and that in other circumstances the workers taking power would not have ended in Stalinism.

INSPIRING

The Russian Revolution was a momentous event. It inspired workers' movements around the world.

Yet today, on the 100th anniversary, you have to look hard to see it discussed anywhere. Contrast, for example, the four-year long commemoration of the First World War (which the revolution helped to end).

You will not hear it said anywhere in the mainstream that the sacrifices of the revolutionary Russian workers who lost their lives in the fight for workers' power, or in the civil war that followed, when foreign armies, including the British, invaded Russia to destroy the new Bolshevik government, benefited British workers. But they did! The Russian workers inspired strikes, and a confidence among British workers that alarmed the rulers here enough to make concessions.

Following the Bolsheviks' example, workers in other countries built powerful communist movements.

Apart from a handful of cultural exhibitions in London there are — so far — few commemorations of 1917.

That is partly deliberate, as the ruling class, through its various means of power and



propaganda, promotes the idea that the Russian revolution — workers taking power — was all a horrible mistake. They ignore it or, if they talk about it, they portray it as the slaughter of the innocents, a coup against democracy, a ruthless, doomed social experiment by evil wrongdoers (the Bolsheviks) who murdered a perfectly delightful and blameless royal family into the bargain.

But the fact that the centenary is not being marked is also the natural result of many people drawing the wrong lessons from 1917.

When the Stalinists overturned the benefits of the revolution, and installed a new, brutal, exploiting economic system they carried out their crimes using the signs, slogans and borrowed prestige of the Bolshevik revolution, thus tarnishing them, unfairly, for an epoch. This false representation has been passed down in historical accounts of all kinds, including those of the left.

Vernadsky's book examines the reasons why Stalin was able to defeat the revolution: the backwardness of Russian society and its economy, the isolation of the Russian revolution after revolutions failed elsewhere in Europe, particularly in Germany, hostile armies invading during the civil war. In these circumstances, and facing poor odds, the revolution was "strangled by the rising bureaucracy inside Russia from the early 1920s". Stalin wiped out including Trotsky and his followers, and gathered to himself absolute power.

Vernadsky examines closely the mistakes the Bolsheviks made, in the context of the pressures on them, but concludes:

"The party that led the 1917 revolution is still an inspiration. This was the party that could take on and defeat all enemies, internal and external, and survive the civil war. This was the party that would rancorously debate out its differences in public and with great sharpness, in order to clarify the assessment and to draw out the political conclusions.

"That party along with the tradition it embodied was not finished after the civil war. Having made such a tremendous, irreplaceable contribution to the Russian working class over decades, it was entirely right for those who wanted to save the Russian revolution to seek to revive whatever could be salvaged from its ranks. There were no other forces, no other agents capable of turning the tables on the bureaucracy and on Stalin's machine at that time than the old guard of militant worker-Bolsheviks".

Alas, the odds stacked against them were too great. After 1928, Vernadsky concludes, nothing remained of the workers' state created by the Bolsheviks and the workers; Russia passed over to a new exploiting class system, Stalinism.

The Stalinist defeat of working-class revolution, however, was not inevitable. We can study the lessons of this period in history to help us avoid the potential dangers.

Apart from a one-day event on 4 November, organised by the TUC's Russian Revolu-

tion Centenary Committee, the labour movement itself seems reluctant or, at least, clueless as to how to remember the revolution. Why is that?

We are living in a period where the left seemed to be on the march, with the election (twice) of Jeremy Corbyn as leader of the Labour Party.

Lenin described Labour as a "bourgeois party, because although it consists of workers it is led by reactionaries, and the worst reactionaries at that, who act fully in the spirit of the bourgeoisie". All comparisons guarded, Corbyn seemed to offer something different from that. Corbyn's surprise win seemed to conjure up some of the Bolshevik spirit!

Yet the recent past in the Labour Party is one of democracy being severely curtailed, particularly under Tony Blair; of the party being imbued with pro-capitalist ideas, tamed, any rebellion against the Tories dampened down, made into an electoral machine, meeting the career ambitions of a few, in the service, ultimately, of capitalism. So what is possible now is being shaped by the past: bureaucratic institutional structures, past practice, inherited ideas.

LEGACY

We must also contend with a long legacy of fear of working-class mobilisation per se.

Mainstream left politics in the UK, including in the unions, sees the goal of politics as getting Labour governments elected, or Labour political representatives elected, within a system that fears working-class mobilisation in the form of strikes and demonstrations, much less workers taking direct control of the places where they live and work, working-class rule.

The Labour Party and trade union movement have been characterised by anxiety

about or outright hostility to working-class self-liberation, and to the working class gaining a sense of itself as a class which has interests different from its rulers. A working class that understands that the current economic system, capitalism, exploits it, and that resolves to change that system radically — to replace it with a system that is more politically and socially democratic and that allows each person to develop fully — socialism.

During the current left resurgence in the Labour Party, there has even been an almost superstitious distancing from "revolutionaries" as if the self-designation one gives oneself in relation to an event 100 years previous were the real dividing line in politics. Workers' Liberty supporters have been the victims of this, with several being expelled from the Labour Party, and Workers' Liberty has had a great deal of hostile press (with other socialists not doing enough to defend us).

Many around Corbyn have tried to distinguish themselves from the "Trots", the revolutionaries. For some this is a defence mechanism: when the right points the finger at the far-left, the unconfident say "we are not like them", in the hope they themselves can avoid hostile scrutiny.

And there are those who think a Corbyn (left)-led Labour Party can by itself bring radical change, removing the need for revolution. They are wrong. The bourgeois state will not allow radical change by radically reforming governments, or not for long.

The real dividing line in politics today is not between self-conscious revolutionaries and those who believe that capitalism is inevitable. It is between those who fight the system and those who accommodate to it. It is between those who rub up against capitalism every day and who feel and hate its effects — the exploited, the alienated, workers and their families — and those who can make their peace with the system, who will never believe in workers' power.

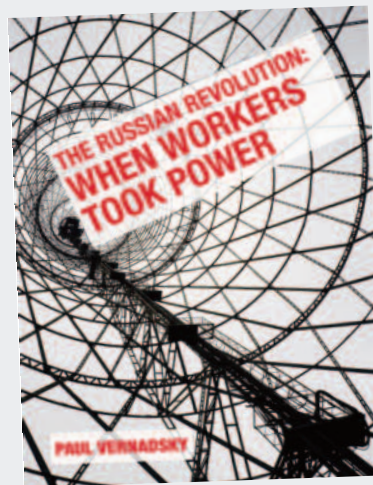
The Bolsheviks believed that the workers could and should take power, that they could transform society and run it in their own interests and in the interests of all humanity, and that the very future of humanity rested on this audacious act!

There are many workers, contending with the system, who don't know this, the true history of the labour movement and the socialist tradition, who would benefit from knowing more about the Bolsheviks, about the history of the Russian revolution. This book is for them!

Inevitably, some of the hostility to commemorating 1917, the "Trot-baiting", the witch-hunting, comes from the political heirs of the Stalinists, who, whether from thoughtless tribalism or genuine political differences, want to erase any trace of Trotsky's legacy from the labour movement. In several chapters in his book, Vernadsky gives detail on the life and death battle between Stalin and his followers and Trotsky and his supporters.

It is ironic but not surprising that in the year when the left should most be remembering and celebrating 1917, large sections of it are afraid to. Yet socialism is an urgent necessity... and a real possibility, if we can learn lessons from socialist history, none greater than the example of the Russian revolution.

If we discuss the ideas in this book, publicly and as widely as we can, we can provide a counter-argument to all of those who want to forget the revolution, bury its positive lessons, and inoculate the working class against the idea of ever taking power again. They must not succeed. We must!



The Russian Revolution: when workers took power can be purchased for £14.80 including p&p. From bit.ly/RuRev. A study guide can be downloaded at the same URL.

Where we stand

Today one class, the working class, lives by selling its labour power to another, the capitalist class, which owns the means of production.

The capitalists' control over the economy and their relentless drive to increase their wealth causes poverty, unemployment, the blighting of lives by overwork, imperialism, the destruction of the environment and much else.

Against the accumulated wealth and power of the capitalists, the working class must unite to struggle against capitalist power in the workplace and in wider society.

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty wants socialist revolution: collective ownership of industry and services, workers' control, and a democracy much fuller than the present system, with elected representatives recallable at any time and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

We fight for trade unions and the Labour Party to break with "social partnership" with the bosses and to militantly assert working-class interests.

In workplaces, trade unions, and Labour organisations; among students; in local campaigns; on the left and in wider political alliances we stand for:

- Independent working-class representation in politics.
- A workers' government, based on and accountable to the labour movement.
- A workers' charter of trade union rights — to organise, to strike, to picket effectively, and to take solidarity action.
- Taxation of the rich to fund decent public services, homes, education and jobs for all.
- A workers' movement that fights all forms of oppression. Full equality for women, and social provision to free women from domestic labour. For reproductive justice: free abortion on demand; the right to choose when and whether to have children. Full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Black and white workers' unity against racism.
- Open borders.
- Global solidarity against global capital — workers everywhere have more in common with each other than with their capitalist or Stalinist rulers.
- Democracy at every level of society, from the smallest workplace or community to global social organisation.
- Equal rights for all nations, against imperialists and predators big and small.
- Maximum left unity in action, and openness in debate.



If you agree with us, please take some copies of *Solidarity* to sell — and join us!

Events

Saturday 29 April

Tyne and Wear May Day Rally
11am, Princess Square Newcastle
bit.ly/2p0Cxct

Manchester May Day festival
11am, All Saints Park, Manchester
bit.ly/2q1PBsR

Nottingham May Day
10.30am, Mansfield Civic Centre,
NG19 7BH
bit.ly/2oHP7Uw

The Ragged Trousered
Philanthropists performance
7pm, Liverpool Central Library,
William Brown Street, Liverpool
L3 8EW
bit.ly/2q9TUyy

Monday 1 May

Internationalist bloc on London
May Day
Noon, Clerkenwell Green, London
bit.ly/2pgFYFW

Chesterfield May Day
10.30am, Chesterfield Town Hall
Rose Hill, S40 1LP
bit.ly/2q9O7co

Saturday 6 May

Croydon All Out to Stop the
Fascists!
10am, Lunar House, 40 Wellesley
Road, Croydon CR9 2BY
bit.ly/2oHIRxy

**Have an event you
want listing? Email:
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More online at www.workersliberty.org



Workers' Liberty



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McCluskey only just re-elected

By Ann Field

Gerard Coyne — the candidate of the right, backed not just by the right-wing media but also by the most right-wing elements of the Labour Party — came within 5,500 votes of being elected the new General Secretary of Unite the Union.

McCluskey got 59,000 votes (45.5%); Coyne 53,500 (41.5%); and rank-and-file candidate Ian Allinson 17,000 (13%).

McCluskey was re-elected, but in every other respect the election result was a major setback for McCluskey and the trade union politics which he represents.

The turnout was pitifully low: just 12.2%, even lower than in the 2013 general secretary election (15.2%) and the 2010 election (15.8%). The number of ballot papers issued (just over a million) also exposed the fall in Unite membership: in 2010 1.5 million ballot papers were issued.

Unite's official statement on the election result blames the low turnout on "the archaic and expensive balloting system imposed on trade unions by law." The statement is an evasion of reality. The key reasons for the low turnout are trade-union-political, not the method of voting.

McCluskey was backed by every Unite Regional Secretary (apart from Coyne), most members of the Unite National Executive Council, and the Unite United Left. He was nominated by 1,185 branches representing 560,000 members. But the upshot of all this was just 59,000 votes.

With McCluskey backing Corbyn, and Coyne spewing out hostility to Corbyn, the election functioned as a proxy Labour Party leadership contest. But despite

what was at stake, and despite the resources he was able to pour into his campaign, McCluskey only just scraped home.

No-one could have foreseen the general election, but the impact of a Coyne victory in such a context does not bear thinking about.

When McCluskey first stood for election in 2010, he stressed that he would be a one-term-only general secretary. But this year he stood for election for a third time, in an unnecessary contest deliberately triggered by his own resignation.

Clearly, many members were alienated by McCluskey's cynical manipulation of the Rulebook, motivated solely by his desire to prolong his term of office. McCluskey was lucky that a lot of them abstained rather than voted for Coyne.

HARD-RIGHT

Coyne deliberately ran a provocative hard-right campaign. His strategy was to mobilise Unite members who normally do not vote in elections. Fortunately, it did not work. But it very easily could have.

Given that he ran his campaign on a shoestring and was up against McCluskey's bureaucratic machine, 17,000 votes can count as a respectable vote for Ian Allinson.

But the collapse in his vote compared with that of the "left" candidate Jerry Hicks in 2013 (80,000) and 2010 (52,000) confirms that Hicks's bedrock electoral support consisted to a large degree of right-wing opponents of McCluskey and ex-Amicus loyalists.

As *Solidarity* goes to press, Coyne is considering mounting a legal challenge to the election result, based on the number of Unite members reported not to have received ballot papers, or to have re-



ceived them only when it was too late to vote.

Coyne himself was also suspended from his job with Unite almost as soon as balloting had closed. Reports of the reasons given for the suspension range from breaches of the Data Protection Act to circulating defamatory material during the election campaign.

Whatever the precise details, the suspension certainly smacks of McCluskey's bureaucratic machine targeting a (very right-wing) dissident.

The dominant left culture within Unite has an excessive focus on elections. There is nothing wrong with wanting to win elections. The problem arises when political life degenerates into electioneering at the expense of rebuilding grass-roots organisation at branch and workplace level.

The general secretary election result is a manifestation of the failure of that approach: a fall in union membership; a fall in turnout; and a fall in the vote for McCluskey.

The key question now is how to bring about a transformation of that left culture and, thereby, of Unite itself.

Courts not answer to undemocratic unions

LETTER

Anyone who has had to confront the bureaucratic officialdom of any trade union will have some sympathy with the GMB activist, who wrote in *Solidarity* of "unelected, barely elected and crookedly elected bureaucrats".

Their letter promotes the new "GMB Grassroots Left" network; prominently involved is Keith Henderson, a former GMB official who has twice taken his former union, and employer to court.

Keith Henderson clearly rubbed the GMB bureaucracy up the wrong way; and probably for the right reasons. Keith is a socialist, a support for the Labour left group LRC, and close to John McDonnell. He may well have a case, in procedural terms.

But, bluntly, the bosses' courts are not any kind of instrument for

reforming the labour movement. Moreover, the basis of Keith's first case against the GMB — which used equalities law to argue that he had been discriminated against on the basis of his socialist beliefs — was spurious to say the least; he may very well have been victimised by a right-wing bureaucracy for being a left-winger, but this is a matter of political conflict, which cannot and should not be regulated by the same laws designed to protect against racist and sexist discrimination.

RANK-AND-FILE

Much of what the GMB activist in their letter sets out as the aims for the GMB Grassroots Left are laudable.

But setting up this network on the basis not of any authentic rank-and-file groundswell, however small, but rather on the basis of frustration on the part of a few ac-

tivists whose original focus was on taking the union through the courts is not an auspicious beginning.

Keith could have used his position in the union, even as an unelected official (which is what he was), to identify well-organised, militant branches, rooted in workplaces, with combative stewards who shared his perspective for democratic reform of the union, and attempted to work with them to build a rank-and-file network. Instead, he chose to take the union to court, twice, and now, several years after the first case, to attempt to set up a network off the back of his court challenges.

While there is a strong temptation to applaud anything that might needle the bureaucracy of the GMB, this attempt is at best quixotic and at worst a total distraction.

Daniel Randall, north London

Forest Hill teachers strike

By a teacher

On Tuesday 25 and Wednesday 26 April, National Union of Teachers' (NUT) members at Forest Hill school in Lewisham struck for the fifth time in their on-going dispute against a management proposed restructuring to deal with a £1.3 million deficit.

The management's proposal sheds 15 teaching jobs, significantly increases teachers' workload, radically reduces the depth of the creative aspects of the curriculum, ends any specialist English as an Additional Language (EAL) support, and massively diminishes the support for students with Special Educational Needs.

In addition to the strikes, there was a demonstration on Saturday 22 April with well over 200 people in attendance, including many councillors and Labour Party members. Furthermore, on Monday 24 April a teacher from the school and another supporter, who were both members of the Labour Party, addressed the Labour Group on the council. This is all part of pressure the campaign is exerting on the council to intervene decisively.

Joe Cowley, the NUT representative at the school, spoke to *Solidarity*:

"The mood is defiant. The head sent a letter out today trying to claim that the only issue was teachers' workload and making no mention of the effect on the students. He also wrote 'please be assured



that the school is working quickly to end the current damaging period of industrial action' which has angered my members further, as management have made no attempt to address our concerns whatsoever or enter into meaningful negotiations."

"The National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers (NASWUT) National Executive has shown no commitment to either their members jobs, conditions or the education of the children. They announced a strike for the 3 May. We quickly announced we would go out alongside them. However, they equally rapidly called off their strike with nothing more than a commitment to talks. We respect NASWUT members; however, their leadership has never shown

any inclination to fight alongside us."

"I believe there will be no resolution without the council's active involvement.

"Management have not addressed or even acknowledged the issues. They are not being honest with us, with the students, the parents and possibly not even with themselves. They have a total disregard for the truth of the situation."

"The demonstration was very inspiring both in terms of the amount of people who came out to support us and in the amount of effort people put in to build it."

"Our union group is going to have another planning meeting after the picket line on the 25th. I believe there is a real appetite for more strike action."

Cinema workers to strike on May Day

By Gemma Short

Workers at five Picturehouse cinemas across London struck on Saturday 15 April.

Workers at Duke of York's cinema in Brighton were also due to strike, but their strike was called off a few days before. The strike was the first for workers at East Dulwich Picturehouse in south London, and they were greeted on the picket line by a demonstration of workers from the other cinemas

and supporters from the labour movement.

Picturehouse management tried to aggressively "manage" the picket line, taking photos of pickets and their supporters, trying to prevent people talking to customers, and calling the police to attend the picket line (who left without doing anything).

Workers will be striking again on Monday 1 May.

• For motions and how to donate



to the strike fund seebit.ly/pic-h

part of concessions they made following a station workers' strike in January.

A union activist told *Solidarity*: "Reversing 325 of the job cuts management has made is significant, and something we wouldn't have won without taking action. When management announce their proposals for where these 325 jobs will go, we may need to have a series of additional fights, for example if management propose to reinsert jobs at a lower grade than the ones they cut.

"Ultimately, 325 additional jobs still isn't enough, and we'll continue to fight for a properly staffed Tube."

saulted a pregnant colleague.

As well as the strike, Tube union RMT has also called industrial action short of a strike, whereby members will not service ticket machines or challenge any passengers about their tickets or Oyster Cards.

Jobs fight goes on

Tube bosses are set to reveal their plans to increase the station staffing level by 325 jobs, as

Tube round-up

By Ollie Moore

London Bridge strike

London Underground station workers at London Bridge will strike on 7-8 May to demand the reinstatement of colleague Lee Cornell.

Lee was sacked after intervening with a fare evader who had as-

NUT: close vote on Labour

By a delegate

Pending the merger of the NUT and the ATL to form the New Education Union (NEU), this year's NUT conference (Easter, in Cardiff) was never likely to be a hotbed of political debate or controversy.

There were very few areas of contention anticipated, but as the weekend unfolded three points of interest became clear on the conference floor.

Firstly, conference voted to call a day of strike action against funding cuts in regions where a strong turnout was felt to be possible. A one day strike is far from ideal, and in many ways could be seen as a strategic error given our recent dismal history of isolated one day strikes losing us all a day's pay and winning nothing.

However, it is the last chance the NUT have to use our live ballot before the merger. If it is made a success it will perhaps set the tone as the joint executives meet to discuss plans for action in the year ahead.

Secondly, conference voted to strengthen our position in solidarity with trans teachers and students. A motion was passed to push the government to change the law to enable self-identification. This did not pass unopposed. A current within the union argued to amend the motion and replace taking an immediate position with opening a period of consultation. The justification for this seemed to be radical feminist position that suggested women's rights within the union and the classroom would be compromised by a strengthened position in favour of trans rights. The amendment fell and the motion passed unamended.

Thirdly, a passionate but staggered and truncated debate was had over primary testing. While a motion was passed reaffirming our opposition to SATs and committing us to prepare for an indicative ballot of primary members to boycott SATs, a stronger motion arguing for all primary members to be balloted to boycott all formal summative testing was defeated.

We won the argument to defeat a wrecking amendment from the executive, but lost the vote on the main motion after the Socialist Teachers' Alliance (now know as the socialist testing alliance), supported by the SWP, manoeuvred to shut down debate and voted against taking decisive action. Some of the most vocal critics of SATs, self-defining socialists, suddenly became ardent defenders of summative testing. This debacle yet again shows the cynicism and incoherence of the so-called left who are so full of warm words but desperate to avoid taking serious action, or even having a democratic debate.

Disappointingly, by a very small margin, conference also voted against exploring a new kind of relationship with the Labour Party, thus ruling out affiliation. This was despite the fact that John McDonnell received a standing ovation after speaking at the opening of conference.

The most positive outcome of conference was the mobilising of delegates around the rank and file network (LANAC), which exposed the empty rhetoric of the leadership and proved itself again to be utterly vital.

This organisation must grow if the NEU is to move beyond left posturing and be an actual force for change.

D00 strikes continue

By Gemma Short

Workers at Northern, Merseyrail, Southern continue to fight to defend the role of the guard on the train.

Workers at Northern and Southern rail will strike on Friday 28 April. Strikes had also been planned on 28-29 April, but were called off on Monday 24 April for

talks with the employer. The RMT had put strikes on hold on Merseyrail for talks with the employer, but after Merseyrail refused to budge on any point those talks collapsed.

A national demonstration against Driver-Only Operation will be held outside Parliament on Wednesday 26 April on the anniversary of the Southern dispute starting.

UCLU cleaners strike

Cleaners at the UCL student union struck on Friday 21 April.

As previously reported in *Solidarity*, UCL students union is cutting the cleaning budget by £90k, and as a result cleaning company Secura Clean is cutting the hours of clean-

ers.

Cleaners picketed the student union, and were joined by students who held a demonstration.

• tinyurl.com/uclucleanerspetition



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Against racism, xenophobia and nationalism Solidarity with migrants!

By Rosalind Robson

Immediately after the June 2016 EU referendum, reports of racist and xenophobic attacks, many on recent migrant populations, increased by 60%.

Levels of reported attacks have since dropped, but are still 14% higher than in 2015. Brexit has fundamentally changed the social as well as the political climate, for the worse. Yet politicians continue to make spurious claims about the "dangers" of immigration.

EU migrants are now increasingly vulnerable: the Tories opposed guaranteeing the rights of all EU nationals currently resident in the UK after Britain leaves the European Union. Theresa May uses EU migrants as a bargaining chip in her negotiations over Brexit.

Playing politics with migrants lives has continued into the Tories' general election campaign. In one of her first campaign statements Theresa May repeated a long-standing Tory pledge, which they have consistently failed to meet, to reduce net immigration into the UK to 100,000 people a year.

The policy enables the Tories to look tough but it is a lie — reducing migration so drastically would collapse the UK economy, and cause desperate understaffing in the NHS. But lying about migration is one thing the Tories (and other politicians) do consistently.

What are the facts?

- The UK is one of the meanest of all rich countries when it comes to letting in refugees. In 2014 France took in twice as many refugees, Germany six times as many (a much higher rate even after accounting for differences in population size).

- There are 5.4 million non-UK born workers in the UK, about 17% of the total workforce. Contrary to common belief just 4% of migrants are asylum seekers (people who are awaiting a decision on their refugee status).

- The government is extremely tough on asylum seekers. In the first three months of 2015 they rejected 64% of asylum claims. Yet around 70% of asylum cases that are appealed are upheld. "Fast-tracking" of asylum decisions means many claimants are deported before they can appeal.

- Many migrants fall foul of the bureaucracy of the system and without access to legal help cannot prove their right to be in the UK. They live in fear of a dawn raid by police and immigration authorities, taking them away from their homes.

- Increasingly the NHS is charging non-EU migrants before they can use secondary services, and soon GP and emergency services will be charged. Non-domiciled EU migrants have to pay a health surcharge.

- There are increasing numbers of immigration raids on workplaces, often on spurious grounds.



- 80% of EU migrants are in work; this is a higher employment rate than the UK-born population. 60% of EU migrants are here because they have a definite job to go to. Overall, there are high and rising employment rates for all EU migrants, non-EU migrant men, and UK-born workers.

It is a fact that migrants are not "taking work" from "British workers".

- Just 1% of migrants claim unemployment benefits compared to 4% of UK nationals.

- Academic research shows that the presence of migrant workers in the population has little or no effect on wage levels. It is bosses

who make wages low, not migrant workers!

The Labour Party has rightly defended the right of EU citizens to live and work in the UK and has said that immigration is not the cause of stagnating wages, declining services and the housing crisis. That's good, but Labour needs to do more. The right to free movement needs to be at the top of Labour's programme in this election.

We need to make a clear socialist case for free movement. Free movement across borders helps extend global individual freedoms for all, and makes cultures more diverse and richer. People who

cross borders should have rights, because we want to win those rights for everyone across the world.

In addition, to win democratic control against the destructive competition of capitalism we need to create joint action by workers in many countries. Socialism cannot be built in one country alone. The working class must unite across borders.

Our alternative to Brexit political retreat is to fight for workers' rights and solidarity across Europe and the world.

**For freedom of movement!
Against racism, xenophobia
and nationalism everywhere!**

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Printed by Trinity Mirror